

THE SEASONS IN THE ROYAL CITY

Part I

Spring and Summer



To hear the song the uguisu sang
A feather garment on the pine bough hangs.
Mid fallen leaves the Buddha of Kamakura
"Come back, come back!" has cast the boomerang.

Clim of the Clough

PREFACE

The "entirely correct" haikai style was achieved by Bashō in the Genroku era (1688-1703)^I. That same time produced the first great flowering of Kabuki, a flowering due, in large measure, to the genius of the playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon^{II}, and of the actors Ichikawa Danjūrō I in Edo, Sakata Tōjūrō I in Kyōto, and Yoshizawa Ayame I in Ōsaka.

References to haikai in Kabuki plays are numerous. Even into modern times it was the normal thing for a Kabuki actor to study and write haikai. And in certain circles Tokugawa actors were almost as well known by their hainyō^{III} as by their acting names. ~~This close and fundamental link between haikai and Kabuki can be~~ ^{By a simple connection} illustrated amusingly with a ku by a son of Yoshizawa Ayame, who like his father was a celebrated onnagata (actor of female parts).

Itsumade mo
musume kokoro no
yanagi kana Keishi

Until no matter when
a young girl's heart,
willows kana

Both the actors named continued to play young woman roles until, or almost until, their deaths at the respective ages of 56 (Ayame) and 67 (Keishi). An onnagata's skill takes a long time to perfect. Great ones are rare. On the ^{the} ~~present~~ ^{re ce} Kabuki stage, too, ageing and portly actors like Baikō and Kanzaburō have shown the musume heart more truly than most younger and slimmer onnagata. Ayame was particularly famous for his courtesan roles. The world of courtesans in human society is as the world of willow trees in nature, it has been suggested. In the ku his contemporaries would at once have seen a joke Keishi directs at himself, and a jocular tribute to his illustrious father. While ~~they~~ ^{these musumes} add interest and amusement, ~~and underline the equivalence and consanguinity of haikai and Kabuki,~~ ^{underline} one need not be aware of ~~these nuances~~ ^{them} for the haiku to work. It is not even necessary to know that in Keishi's time young girls in Japan wore garments with almost floor-length sleeves (furisode) that in movement would wave and flutter like the branches of a willow in the wind. The season-word (kigo or dai, in this case willows) is perfectly realised for any time, for any place where willows grow. If it were otherwise this Spring ku would not be a haiku. Keishi, by the way, is his hainyō. He acted under the name Nakamura Tomijūrō, and created and first performed the ever popular Kyōganoko Musume Dōjō-ji. (1753).

I. As a cultural period Genroku is not taken as falling exactly within these dates, but as beginning some 15 years earlier and extending to about 1753.

II. Chikamatsu (1653-1724) achieved his greatest fame as a writer for the puppet theatre, but he wrote many Kabuki plays for and in close collaboration with Sakata Tōjūrō, and was for years the principal playwright at Tōjūrō's Miyako-za in Kyōto.

III. Utaemon, who is slim and no longer young, is in a class by himself. He does not accent the musume.

The natural affinity that exists between haikai and Kabuki, exists between Noh, which dates from the early Muromachi period (1392-1573) and waka (Japanese classical poetry), which goes back to the beginnings of Japanese history. Zeami Motokyo, the creator of Noh, stipulated that a person engaging in Noh should stay away from all studies not strictly concerned with it. He made an exception only for classical poetry, because he considered the waka to be at the root of Noh. It is the more interesting, therefore, that after the war, when the haiku had for the most part sunk to a deplorably trashy level, the monthly Noh magazine Kanze continued to publish what were still real haiku. The "Noh haiku" as a valid thing that to some extent carried forward the achievement of Masaoka Shiki, sprang entirely from the efforts of one man, Ikeuchi Takeshi.

Takeshi was born in 1889 (Meiji 22) in Matsuyama, Shikoku. Kyôshi, one of Shiki's principal disciples, was his uncle. After highschool he was sent to the Tôyô Institute (later Tôyô University) in Tôkyô, but he dropped out and began studies under a teacher of the Hôshô school of Noh, with the intention of becoming a Noh actor. (His father was active in Noh in Shikoku). After a time, probably because his teacher died, he broke off this study and became a haiku pupil of Kyôshi. It was no doubt deliberate that when he himself turned to teaching he chose people whose life was spent in Noh, not especially haijin, to bring into embodiment what were, so late in the decline, still valid haiku.

Later we hope to show how the ancient Noh instills genuineness into the modern haiku, and how these haiku can provide insights into Zeami's Noh that are perhaps no longer to be gained directly in today's theatres. But first something should be said about the two forms separately.

Noh is usually translated accomplishment, but it is probably more helpful for the form Zeami fashioned to take the meaning to be able, to have the potency. For the Noh performance method has to do with the relationship between the main performer (Shite=Doer) and the given area in which he functions, potency and boundary mutually conditioned, depending the one upon the other.

The elements of a Noh play are soon named. Besides the Shite there is his vis-à-vis, the Waki (One standing by, Assistant). Either of these may have one or more Tsure (Taken Alongers), and perhaps a Tomo (Follower). There is a Kyôgen (Mad Words) interlude player called Ai (Between). There are two or three drummers and a flutist, and the Ji Utai (Ground Singers, Chorus) usually amounting to eight. Two, or on ceremonial occasions three, Kôken dress the Shite and attend him on stage when needed, And there is the Audience. All these are necessary to the performance. Nothing extraneous enters. A play may or may not have two parts separated by the naka iri (going behind the curtain of the Shite), but there always is a Mae Shite (Before Shite) and a Nochi Shite (After Shite), though the exact moment of change is in a one-part play not always easy to perceive.

There are some 360 plays from which the 5 schools of Noh could make up an infinite variety of programs, if they were so inclined. In practice at least half of these are rarely, if ever, put on. Except for a small number that may be performed in any season (these include the "heavy" or most secret pieces), the 360 are divided into Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter plays. Each is not only intended for a specific season, but usually also for a specific month within that season. (This, incidentally is true for most kigo in the haiku calendar as well).

Again, a play has its proper place in the Noh program. It is either a 1st, 2nd, 3d, 4th or 5th place play. Every two part play has a Kyôgen interlude, and besides the 5 Noh plays there must be at least 2 Kyôgen plays for it to be a complete program. If two, these must come after the 2nd and 3d place plays. It is not the individual play, it is the program as a whole that is the Noh.

One way of looking at the program is in relation to a man's life:

1st place:	Auspicious pieces. Gods, Emperors appear.	Childhood
2nd place:	Asura (Titan) pieces. The Shite is usually a warrior.	Youth
3d place:	Female wig-pieces or love-sorrow Noh.	Young manhood
4th place:	Satori Noh. Frequently living-person pieces, including mad woman pieces.	Maturity
5th place:	After satori Noh. The Shite is usually a demon, or some other potent being. Showing the power released by satori.	Old Age

There are other ways of analysing the program, more abstruse, none of them final, all of them mere approximations, because the only final and correct thing is the Noh itself, which, one might add, has nothing to do with ghost plays, symbolism, or psychology in the western sense. Far from being stylised, it deals in the most direct manner with the undiminished real. This, too, is the sphere of haikai.

Hai means to be playful, to ramble about. A haijin is a hai man, a writer--male or female--of ku whose essence is hai. All Tokugawa haijin were great travellers, roaming over the sixty-six provinces like Summer clouds. There is always hai, but the haijin chooses his way to "idly rambling cut off distress"^I. As an example one might consider the three great exponents of successive periods since the entirely correct style emerged. Bashô was most of his life a wandering lay monk, an io (grass hut) haijin. Buson for extended periods lived in the pleasure districts,

I. From the 3d Zen Patriarch's Shradda Record.

Issa immersed himself in the every day world, where an almost laughably complete series of common disasters overtook him. Ever insouciant, he ended up living in a barn, the only part of his farm left standing after a fire.

To these three Tokugawa masters Shiki makes a fourth in modern times. He did that most difficult of difficult things, he found a way to continue the haiku for the benefit of people at a time when Japan was fast being sucked into the maelstrom of the Kali Age^I, where most of the world had long been whirling about contentedly.

Since not even the Buddha taught before he was forty, that age has in Buddhist countries commonly been considered the correct one to begin teaching. Shiki was 35 when he died. For at least five years prior to that he was virtually bed-ridden and in constant severe pain. Although his own accomplishment was complete, he was granted neither the time nor the ease of body and mind to develop himself as a teacher and, to his own despair, he proved unable to pass on to his disciples what he most certainly knew. But for this fact the course of the haiku in the 20th century might have been very different. One may feel regret at the thought. Still, there is nothing to prevent anyone from doing what the masters did: go to the haiku, study, and contemplate the seasons.

Hai written with a different character means to be respectful, to regard with awe. This quality is necessary for haiku too, and all haijin possess it. Playfulness, and a respect for all things, and out of their coition, purity. Our buried inheritance that must be uncovered.

Though the Noh people whose haiku will appear hereafter are from both the Tôkyô and the Kyôto Kanze theatres, and their teacher Takeshi lived in Tôkyô, the reader will find that in Kyôto lies the scene. This is only natural, because every area in Kyôto is directly connected with Japanese poetry and Noh. Even the most prosaic busride becomes a small delight if one closes one's eyes and listens only to the auspicious names reeled off by the busgirl: Arashi Yama, Kurumazaki Jinja, Taishi Mae, Sagano, Hanasono, Hakuraku chô, Sanjô-Kawaramachi. Each name reminds one of an emperor, a poet or a play. And so with every route.

As for the characters that figure in the following pages, none of them are imaginary and their dates may be found in many books. Here all one need to know about them is that they are--male or female-- emperors, courtiers, warriors or monks. And that all are poets, world makers and world forsakers.

I. Name of the last and worst of the 4 ages in Hindu Philosophy. Sometimes (as here) used as a convenient term for the last stage in the decline of a Buddha field (which also goes in 4 stages)²; ~~that is~~ the stage when the Buddha's teachings are totally misunderstood. The closed borders of Japan and Tibet were the last stand of those Buddhist societies against the encroachment of the Kali Age from without.

Kokei hashi
nozokeba tsubaki
ochite ari
Shiyô

Tiger Valley Bridge;
looking over it, a camellia
fallen there.

This haiku conveys in a delightful manner the easing of Winter cold and the fascination of fallen camellias.

There are tsubaki that begin to bloom in late autumn, covering whole trees and hedges, in that season an enchanting sight. But these scatter. The flower that surprises and delights when fallen to the ground is the Spring-blooming yabu tsubaki.

Mostly a brilliant Chinese red or jade white, the flowers appear as if from nowhere among the dark glossy leaves and as suddenly are on the ground. One is not at all certain that they do not appear simultaneously on the branch and on the ground. They always fall face up, to lie there exotic and perfectly pure on the still wintry ground.

How then if one were to step from one's mountain hut one morning and, strolling down toward the bridge one has vowed never again to cross, lean over it to see a brilliant red camellia in the clear water, or on a rock perhaps. Where did it come from? Higher up on the mountain or by the side of the waterfall a tree must be in bloom. Spring has come, even as far as China.

For the person who is here thought to be peering over the bridge is none other than E-On Zenji, a Buddhist sage of Ch'in, who went into retreat at the foot of Rosan on one side of the Kokei Bridge and vowed never to cross to the other side again.

It was a time of great learning in China and with him went a group called the Eighteen Wise Men, as well as several hundred of less learned people. From a lotus pond at the place of their retreat they took the name White Lotus Colony. No lotus eaters they, however. Winters must have been very hard, the practices severe. Both zazen and the repetition of Amida's name were continuously engaged in, and all the precepts strictly kept. Nozokeba seems to take in all this, the removed, languid feeling that comes with the relaxing of great effort, and the mild mood of Spring, that must cause even sages to think: "aware!"

The sudden intrusion of the gaudy flower on the implied no-colour Winter and Zen world of the first line, is not unlike the dazzling entrance of the Shitabyôshi onto a stage peopled with grey and white clad monks in Kabuki's Musume Dôjôji. There argument at once arises as to whether this is a goddess or a woman. Strangely enough, she turns out to be a snake.

The tsubaki has not quite that power of transformation, but it can call up, endearingly, the world of colour; memories of court garments perhaps.

Imperial Archives/ Flower time/ Brocade curtains
Ro San/ Rain night/ A grass hut

This poem by Po Chû-i was sent to a friend in the imperial city when Po Chû-i was staying in a grass hut on Rosan Mountain, and contrasts the elegant condition in which the friend abides (as did Po Chû-i formerly) with the poet's present humble circumstances. The contrast is greatly one of colour: flowers and rain,

brocade and the neutral tone of straw. A graceful tribute to a friend, and not less so because it also is in praise of Po Chü-i's own estate.

The first part is of a great intensity of feeling. Of course the intoxication of things at their height and in high places. But also that flowers scatter, and that behind brocade curtains brocade sleeves are frequently drenched in tears of love.

The second part is equal, but not so personal nor so intense. The mountain, the rain, the grass hut. The colour is removed, things are seen as they are, immensely potent, the innocent play of earth, water, fire and air.

Po Chü-i and his distant friend throw us right back to E-On Zenji and his friends, who figure in the Noh play San Shô (Three Laughing). While E-On Zenji is in retreat one side of the Kokei Bridge, on the other side two of his former when-in-the world companions are differently engaged in practicing the four dignities.^I Tô Emmei has been cultivating chrysanthemums and planting pine trees where he goes, as well as drinking sake day and night. Riku Shusei has been perfecting himself in Taoist magic. As the play begins these two come to the Kokei Bridge and enquire after the Zenji. The sage, stepping from his hut, beckons them to his side. (With a sutra scroll!) They amble across, and sitting down on the bridge begin to ask questions. "Is it true you say one is not a monk, unless one come to Rosan?" "What can you tell us about this waterfall?" These opening dialogues in Noh plays are always a delight to listen to. This, one realizes, is real conversation. The subjects are the things people delight in. The tone is generous and easy. The mode ususally the one called kotoba (spoken). But even where the Shite sings, it is in the style of singing called "without beat."

This broad and easy tone gives the ever-electric quality to the first participation of the Ji Utaï (chorus) when it begins to sing "with beat". Another formal kind of dialogue, the rongi, is entirely sung with a very marked beat and is infinitely fascinating in that way, however similar from play to play. The rongi usually contains some kind of revelation, frequently even the words: "Why now further hide anything?" These words are very signal and a helpful way to think about them seems to lie in this poem from the Kokinshû:

This happiness,
how hide it?
If I had known,
I should have ordered
this Chinese garment
with wider sleeves.

This may seem far fetched, but not if one consider it more closely and in connection with the importance of sleeves and kara goromo (Chinese, or empty, garment) in Noh. Why, indeed how, further hide anything! Bliss will out.

But in San Shô no revelations are needed. There is no Waki, and the three sages are perfectly equal. And so the talk is of ancient days. They sing, they dance, they drink (the rule against drinking is for this night relaxed out of respect for Tô Emmei) and at the time of parting, carried away with wine and the duties of a host, E-On Zenji staggers across the bridge between his friends.

^I Standing, walking, sitting lying down. Regulating them for human intercourse through detailed codes of manners, as was done f.i. in ancient China and classical

"Have you not broken your vow?" they ask him then, and all three burst into laughter.

In Noh this laughter is, of course, silent. Still, it is the only place where the Shite is even said to be laughing. Kyôgen actors laugh a great deal, and loudly, usually derisively. There are times in Kyôgen when everyone on stage is laughing. This may then be abruptly cut off. Matter of factly turning their backs on the audience the actors walk offstage, leaving ^astunned, empty silence that can be quite chilling.

But there is nothing so ominous in the laughter of these sages. They are like clouds, not attached, not base. Free, fearless, they are therefore harmless to anything whatsoever. "It is once more that ancient time when the three laughed"—so ends the play. A line that has perhaps its own fearfulness, but as it operates in the play gives a feeling of joy and ease.

Even in the comparatively few years since most of the haiku that will be discussed were written, Kyôto has greatly changed and many of the smaller temples where the Noh people held their haiku meetings are no longer open to the public, who are considered "heartless". But it is possible sometimes with fair certainty to pinpoint the exact place and circumstance of a haiku.

In the outer gardens of famed Ryôan-ji is a large pond with many lotus in it. A rivulet, lined with camellia trees, runs into the pond. A small stone bridge, called The Three Laughing Bridge, spans the little brook, with on one side, behind a wall a "grass hut". In the pond, whose lotus are mostly red, is a small island called The Reclining Tiger. Might not a Noh person (or indeed a "abuki person) standing on this bridge think: "That was the white lotus pond of ancient days' Rosan. This is the red lotus pond of Today's Miyako." The haiku contains both, and we are made to feel more tender towards what tends to appear a blemished time and place.



Waka take ni
kiyoki kiekeri
haru no yuki
Kosetsu

On young bamboo,
purely, it vanished;
Spring snow.

An actor few now alive remember, but whose excellence, as that of his son after him, has become legendary, is Kanze Kosetsu, a person whose young manhood was in Tokugawa times and who died late in the Meiji era. This beautiful haiku is his jisei (moment of death poem.).

In the Kanze school only the greatly accomplished actors of advanced age are allowed to use snow (setsu) as part of their names. Kosetsu means red snow.

This is indeed the haiku of a person completely steeped in Noh. Zeami's boyhood name was Fujiwaka, Young Wisteria, or: Deathlessly, Matchlessly ~~Young~~. His later name was Motokiyo, Root Purity. These names are echoed in the opening words of the first two lines. Kiekeri is the kind of word that might end the first half of a Noh play, when the Mae Shite vanishes as if he had not been. The young bamboo might refer to his son, who later took the name Kasetsu (Flower Snow).

No doubt the son was severely trained, but how light a thing it was after all, only Spring snow. The greater weight, the snow of Winter, is yet to come. But Spring snow having left nothing but purity, there is a sense of ease and fulfillment. As the Mae Shite vanishes, the Nochi Shite will be revealed in his perfection.

Haruzame ni
nurete keiko ni
kuru hito mo
Nobuhiro

In Spring rain
drenched, come-for-practice
people, even.

In and around Noh, behaviour and apparel are very correct. This could not be otherwise. It seems rather amusing therefore that people coming for practice should not have been armed with umbrellas on a day that looked like rain. Well, perhaps they were, but could not bear to open them. It is hard to open one's umbrella against Spring rain.

The study of Noh is a long and gradual process. Year in year out the pupils come to the teacher's house. Even after they themselves have become Shi, the practice continues, coming and going, each season bringing its change of clothing, its change of plays to be practiced.

To the teacher around whom all this activity revolves progress must seem very slow at times. Spring rain suddenly makes things shoot up. Here he thinks, kindly, "They are drenched in rain too. Who knows, perhaps this year...."

Yuki shizuku
 yokete keiko no
 hito kitari
 Shirô

Snow flakes;
 dodging them, for their lesson
 people come.

This is, of course, a Winter haiku, but it makes a droll contrast to the preceding one. One would say, the teacher's view here is less kindly. These haijin all belong to the Kanze school, and as seen before, to be allowed to add snow to one's name is a rare honour to a Kanze actor. There are numerous references in plays to snow-covered heads, as in Takasago and the various old woman plays. The words seem to describe sad or declined situations, but the real portent is later revealed to be quite opposite. To see his pupils ^{stir}dodging snow flakes might well make the teacher temporarily impatient with their shortsightedness.

Hyaku hana en
 haruzame kasa wo
 sashite iru
 Manzô

Hundred flowers garden.
 Spring rain umbrella
 open, go in.

On the surface this haiku, too, has that easy, fresh, leisurely feeling common to all Spring rain haiku. But going somewhat deeper, we are abruptly transplanted into the Kyôgen world. (Manzô is a Kyôgen actor). The businesslike person observed here is not only protecting himself against the possible effects of Spring rain, he wants no part of those flowers either. True, it is a hazardous matter to enter a garden where a hundred kinds of flowers (or many cherries) bloom. Heavenly Beings have been known before this to be attracted to such places and descend in a shower of music, incense and mandarava blossoms. But for the real dangers of this garden the umbrella wielder has brought the wrong weapon. What use an umbrella against the perfume of the flowers? However hurried or furtive his passage, cling-in to his sleeves it will mark him as surely as if he dallied there.

But that is not the real joke yet. What, really, are these hundred species of flowers? They are the hundred Dharma outside which nothing falls, not the umbrella wielder, not the umbrella. At every moment these, as do all other things, cast their perfume never to be forgotten and from which worlds will spring.

Murasaki ni
ki ni kurenai ni
monome kana

Yutaka

Murasaki
In purple,
yellow, crimson,
things come to bud kana

This is one of those haiku you can take from the top down or from the bottom up. Purple has been called the karma colour, but one could also call it the colour of memory. Here it divides into two, yellow and red, dislike and like, perhaps, and from this, things take their shape. If we start with the budding of things, the red is seen as flowering, the yellow as withering and the purple as evaporating into memory, and so one could begin again.

It is a poignant thing, that colour shows with the first budding. Just coming up, one plant looks much like the next, but:

Since they've budded,
pointing-the-finger-at-people grasses
have disappeared.

Issa

A person dressed in his karma-record body could feel slightly uncomfortable going abroad on the Spring moor where everything is coming up clean, fresh and innocent and seemingly unlimited. But soon, with a feeling of compassion, he notices that distinctions of colour and form creep out, according to the seed, no more to be escaped than his own body.

The trees and grasses that have no heart,
human beings with their feelings,
not any of them can escape aware, (something like pathos)

it is said in the play Eguchi, and leading up to that:

Crimson flowers on Spring mornings,
though they adorn the mountains in crimson brocade,
the evening wind entices them away.
Yellow leaves on Autumn evenings,
though the dappled yellow of the leaves is deep,
in the morning frost it changes.

The red flowers are torn away, frost comes to settle on the yellow leaves. In either case the colour is gone.

The aware of people has a twofold cause, too -- markedly so with the courtesans of Eguchi.

.Some who are waited for
do not come when evening falls.
Those who lie together in green-curtained rooms
must part when morning comes.

The aware here is that iro (colour, or passion) is not destroyed, that "to a temporary dwelling the heart clings." Murasaki would seem to be the heart that clings, but it is also something much purer than that. [There was once a man in attendance on a highborn lady with whom he entered into a love relationship. Later

When the wild iris there bloomed, he sent her some with this poem attached:

First wooing's
one time dwelling's
wild irises,
their colour only, alas,
memories seen.

To which the lady replied:

The murasaki
colour not put forth,
not seen as: then!
even more distant,
the one-time dwelling.

As memory murasaki is both grief and consolation. How perfectly manly and womanly feeling is expressed in this exchange.

The whole of Eguchi is built on an exchange of poems. There is perhaps no play in Noh, or anywhere, that approaches it for a sense of splendour. It is a third place play, a sorrow Noh, but the tone is so splendid that it seems equally a satori Noh.

The beginning is plain enough, a meeting between a village woman and a traveling monk who discuss what happened in that place (Eguchi) in the distant past—an exchange of poems between the great poet-monk Saigyô Hôshi and the famed courtesan Eguchi no Kimi. Finally saying: "You have come unexpectedly" and then quoting the Shirabyôshi song so often quoted in Noh plays: "Sheltering under one tree, dipping water from the same stream, is because of a link from a former life," the village woman disappears, only her voice echoing that she is in fact Eguchi no Kimi.

In the second half she returns in a boat, gorgeously dressed and attended by two lesser courtesans. The Waki, of course, remains the same. At least seemingly so, but with the last words of the Mae Shite in mind one really sees a confrontation between Saigyô Hôshi and Eguchi no Kimi. Nothing could be more lofty. The great courtesan sings and dances and discourses on the dharma with equal ease. The play has a rare gaiety. If one has the tendency to put a sentimental tone to the word aware or to such statements as "Let not your heart cling to a temporary dwelling," Saigyô Hôshi and Eguchi no Kimi show the falsity of that tone. They are both sutebito, having thrown away people. But this has nothing to do with a diminishing. Released from clinging, the feelings flow in their full power and splendour, and the real colour and form of things is seen. At the end the courtesan's pleasure boat changes into Bodhisattva Samanthabhadra's mound, ^{Sanskrit} an elephant, and all the brilliant colour of the play is absorbed into that purest of pure whites.

It may seem odd so at length to discuss a Spring haiku in terms of an Autumn play, but the matter of iro, which is the body of this haiku, seems most perfectly expressed in Eguchi, though it's true colour ^I be white.

Still, here is a Spring haiku by Ransetsu, one of the sages of the Bashô school, in praise of that other beauty, Ono no Komachi, which is equally applicable, and about which not a word need be said:

Waga koi yo
me mo hana mo naku
hana no iro
Ransetsu

My love feelings!?
without eyes or nose
cherryblossom colour.

Or if we disregard the characters and take only the sound:

without bud or flower,
cherry blossom colour.

Cherries.

Shôji-ji ni
ocha wo itadaki
hana tsukare
Hiroko

At the Victorious Temple
tea gratefully received,
flower weariness.

Rai nen mo
mata kite mitashi
Hna no Tera
Marunaka

Next year, too,
again want to come to see *it*
Flower Temple

I. Hattori Ransetsu (1654-1707)

*A next-year - too -
again - want to come to see*

first haiku the vanquished, rather sheepishly apologetic, humbly drink tea. In the second they depart in an almost incoherent babble. Much like those doctors leaving the sickroom praising the jisei (death poem).

Shôji-ji, but it is always spoken of as Hana no Tera, is one of those rather remote mountain temples that are so hard to leave and which one never leaves without the set idea to return very soon, never mind next year. Here are the true western hills. Though the Arashi Yama area, too, is so spoken of, it is really north-west and, in spite of its stern name (~~Storm~~ Mountain), today all too easily accessible. Such ancient places as Shôji-ji, Ôharano Jinja, Jûrin-ji, Yoshimine-dera, are still quite inconvenient to get to and no one much goes there except in flower time. Or to gather bamboo shoots. The bamboo groves are endless, leading into these hills.

The buildings at Shôji-ji are on one level, but the grounds are terraced and everywhere are cherries, flower sleeve to flower sleeve as it were. The temple's principal fame rests on the fact that here the warrior Satô Norikiyo shaved his head and became Saigyô Hôshi. And, of course, there is in the grounds the inevitable Saigyô sakura. This is not such an unfeeling remark as it may seem. Bashô, passing a person's flowery garden, remarked: "It also has a Saigyô io, I shouldn't wonder." He thus honored the garden by putting it on a level with the Yoshino Mountains, the supreme place for cherryblossoms, where Saigyô's most famous io is.

The temple does actually have a teahouse where the poet's hut is supposed to have been, a spot that overlooks much of the area. In an even more far-surveying place stands a regular refreshment teahouse and the defeated cherryviewers likely drank tea there. Their apology is twofold. One, that instead of wandering on and on they have become wearied with flowers. Two, that they are having tea. What goes with cherries is sake, not tea. The cherryviewers of old were made of sterner stuff, forgetting the way home, beckoned on by the beauty of the flowers; courting drunkenness for Spring's own sake.

Hana ni akanu
ukiyo otoko no
nikusa kana Chiko

Still not fed up with flowers,
the floating-world man's
hatefulness kana

Even a scolding woman, it appears from this ku by Kyôrai's sister, can be something perfect and charming. The lady has no doubt some flowers in her garden that are well worth seeing and wasted on one beautifully dressed creature alone. But the man who promised, quite forgetting that he is an ukiyo person with promises and obligations to attend to, is out somewhere staggering after cherries. How hateful he is! Yet, how in a way delightful to think of him out there, unwearied by flowers. Quite noble really. Innocent as the butterfly that, though unaware that flowers scatter and become rubbish, hastens hither and yon, visiting them all. Such a man will be faithful, to many women.

I. Mukai Kyôrai, (1651-1704), one of the ten sages of the Bashô school.

hopes to witness is the scattering of some petals by the sound of the bell, as in the old poems. But perhaps only the evening bell rung by a practised hand has this effect.

At Ōharano Jinja, just below Shōji-ji, in cherry time an archery contest is held under the flowers. The participants wear Heian clothes, a pleasant thing to come upon unexpectedly. This shrine was built expressly for the Fujiwara Imperial Consorts after the court removed to Kyōto, the family shrine in Nara, the Kasuga Shrine, having become too inaccessible. There is a famous poem written by Ariwara no Narihira on the occasion of such a shrine visit by Fujiwara Takaiko, whose son had at the time been named crown prince, though she herself had not been given rank yet. Besides Ōhara, the poem mentions Oshio Yama, another of the western hills, which, too, is sacred to the divine ancestor of the Fujiwara family. On this hill stands Jūrin-ji, the temple to which Narihira retired and where he died. Jūrin-ji is strangely tied to the principals in the Narihira-Takaiko drama. The temple's main image is a Jizō statue particularly worshipped by women who so far have been denied a child. Its efficacy goes back to the consort of the Emperor Montoku, who having remained childless for years performed intensive practices before this Jizō, after which she finally conceived. This child was the later Emperor Seiwa, whose consort Takaiko became. After Narihira retired to Jūrin-ji he had a pond constructed there to which sea water was brought from Naniwa and as a pastime he had salt drawn from the water by burning, taking pleasure in contemplating this simple activity. The vestiges of this pond remain on the hillside facing toward Ōharano Jinja. On the days when Takaiko, then Empress, would make her visits to the shrine, Narihira invariably had these salt fires lit, that she might see the smoke and know she was remembered. So the monks tell.

Two very beautiful plays for flower time have Narihira as the Shite. Oshio, which takes place at the Ōhara Shrine, and Unrin-in. laid at the Unrin-in in Kyōto. Of this once sumptuous detached palace, granted into a temple, one small hall remains, buried among houses across the street from that flourishing Zen temple Daitoku-ji.

The Waki in Unrin-in is a man from Ashiya who since childhood has been a constant reader of the Ise Monogatari (Tales of Ise). In a dream he receives a hint that it would be well in this respect if he went to Miyako and visited the Unrin-in, and he does so. One of the mysteries of the play is that there is no connection at all between the Ise Monogatari and the Unrin-in. The name of the temple means cloud forest. The area surrounding it is called Murasakino. There is no trace of it now, but Murasaki Shikibu's grave was at the Unrin-in and she is said to have explained her book, chapter by chapter, to the Emperor Goreizei at this temple. So that there is a strong connection with the Genji Monogatari. Equally mysterious, in the play Takaiko is described as waiting for Narihira in a place that figures only in the Genji Monogatari. Noh playwrights are frequently accused of slips of the brush, but that is of course nonsense. The opening lines of Unrin-in seem to indicate that the connection between the place and the Ise Monogatari must be sought in the colour purple, which is associated associated with Narihira no less than with the Genji Monogatari.

Unrin-in is by Zeami, Oshio by his son-in-law Zen Chiku. A comparison between the plays is quite illuminating. Both are fourth place plays. In both the Mae Shite is an old man and the Nochi Shite, the poet Narihira, dances a j6 no mai (slow tempo dance). This dance is not typical for a fourth place play and altogether rare danced by a man. With these similarities there are significant differences. Unrin-in is extremely specific and detailed. One knows far more about the Waki than is customary, for instance. What the two lovers wear as they steal from the palace is minutely described, where they go, how. And, almost shockingly in the case of a Nochi Shite, the word warera (we) is used. There is a sense of extreme youth and beauty, of wandering, a drenchedness in dew and tears. "I have come to talk about the Tales of Ise" says the Nochi Shite, but all that is spoken of is a single night's escapade.

Oshio focuses on the period when the lovers are irrevocably separated. The play is almost all quotation, one poem following after another. What is discussed in Unrin-in seems absolutely, painfully, unique. What comes forward in Oshio is all embracing.

Ohara ya
Oshio no yama mo
kefu koso wa
kami yo no koto mo
omohi izuramu

Ohara and
Oshio Mountain too,
today truly
the age of the gods' things
bring to mind.

This is that famous poem by Narihira. It has a double surface meaning. It is a poem of comparison, saying in effect: This splendidly dressed procession, escorting a ravishingly beautiful woman through a landscape adorned with flowers, the age of the gods cannot have shown anything surpassing this. Secondly it is a congratulatory poem: The divine ancestor to whom Ohara and Oshio Yama are sacred cannot but feel that this descendant has reached a height that does not put to shame the origins of her house.

Thirdly, in its hidden meaning, it is a love poem: You are now an Emperor's consort and the mother of a future Emperor, but do you not today perhaps remember the time of intimacy with Narihira. Again, this is almost shocking, for it is their love affair that is spoken of as the age of the gods.

When the Mae Shite {a humble old man}, discusses this poem he says: "A mere person like myself should perhaps not venture to say this, for Heaven is awesome. But from the Heaven-and-Earth-Gods' great age, the in the human body woman-man-way (imose no michi), it is not shallow. Imose is usually translated husband and wife, but the real meaning of the term is sister-brother and its origin goes back all the way to that sister and brother who brought forth the islands of Japan, first taking body from bodilessness.

Truly the matchless above the clouds flowershape,
in the four directions unknown,
the one time age of the gods story manifest,
it is only that.

This seems to be an answer to the Waki's question as to whose elegant appearance (Narihira's as the Nochi Shite) this may be. But one must not forget that the play is built on the Ohara poem, and that the real flower is Takaiko. Taking the surface

meaning, the Waki exclaims: "A grateful thing! Is there then an unwithered karmic link between us?"

Shite: "The pledged persons in their variousness"

Waki: "They come to mind."

One can hardly hold on to this, it grows so large, but one sees at the same time that the intensely personal image created in Unrin-in is fully equal to the awesomeness here.

According to the version in the Ise Monogatari, at the time of Takaiko's shrine visit an ancient courtier drew near her carriage window and offered the Ôhara ya poem. Now Narihira was at that time not an old man. Nor was he at the time of the night episode described in Unrin-in so very young, being fourteen years older than Takaiko. But such considerations are irrelevant. The dry potency of old age, the moist freshness of youthful feeling in these cherry plays they spring one from the other. But in Narihira, that Man of Ancient Days, they are ever present as one.

II

Na no Hana

While cherries are still in bloom the na flower takes over in the fields and everywhere great patches of them can be seen. Na is a general name for green things, and the rapé plant does have an over-abundance of bright green leaves in which there seems to be much of the yellow of the flower. Na is also a word for name; nevertheless the flower is actually nameless, just a field-greens flower. This humbleness makes it endearing.

Na no hana ya
chikai nô no
Butai ari^{Ushio}

Na flowers ya
Near where a Noh
stage is.

Where can this be one wonders. A Noh stage is a far from humble thing. Its proper place is in the house of some great family, in a temple or a shrine. What should the na do there.

Na flowers ya
Up to about here
the palace grounds. Kikaku

Wandering about the outlying districts of Kyoto one is never very far from the site of a former imperial palace, country villa or retirement seat. Most of these are remembered only in place names. There is more than one area in the southern outskirts of Kyoto called Within the Precincts for instance.

A peculiar ancient stillness lies over these southern districts, most clearly felt on sunny mild spring days when the moist air is hazy. The fields seem to stretch for miles and although beyond them can be seen the new super highways, beyond these again is the ring of mountains, West, North and East, vague blue with perhaps some snow remaining. In such an area, where forgotten temples abound, one might well come upon a Noh stage encroached on by na flowers. Of course, a real

non stage, standing under the open sky, is quite an inexpressible thing. However, condition it is in, looking at it one is refreshed.

Na no hana ya
koi tsuka to iu
matsu hito ki
Heitarô

Na flowers ya
Love's Grave, it's called,
the single pine tree.

In Noh the Toba district on the outskirts of Kyôto, is always associated with two famous places: Koi Tsuka and Aki no Yama. These lie not far from the east bank of the Katsura river, Koi Tsuka a short walk south from Aki no Yama. East of Aki no Yama is the Jûnangu Shrine, and a quiet walk through the fields further east brings one to the mausolea of the Emperors Shirakawa, Toba and Konoye. These surround An-raku-ji, a temple associated with these Emperors, old in history though the building is not. The Jûnangu Shrine is said to be on the site of the Emperor Shirakawa's retirement palace, the Toba Dono, later used by the Emperor Toba in retirement. Like all shrines it is well kept, but it is in the more desolate surroundings of the misasagi and of Emperor Shirakawa's North-Facing Fudô temple that one becomes aware of the extreme beauty and tranquility the place must have had, and why it was chosen as the site for a palace.

To get to Aki no Yama from the Jûnangu Shrine one has to take a pedestrian overpass over the Kyôto-Osaka highway, but beyond that and as far as Koi Tsuka it is still possible to walk on dirt roads. Aki no Yama is supposed to have been the place where firewood was gathered for the Toba Palace. It comes as a surprise that this Autumn Mountain is no mountain at all, hardly a hill even. But thickly planted with trees and lying in the midst of ricefields, as it is even now, it must have been startlingly beautiful in autumn colours when there was little to distract the eyes.

Koi Tsuka is about the smallest temple possible. Beyond the modest little gate and one stupa grave with a stone railing around it there is little of a temple about it. The one building could be anything and is further strongly domestic, with laundry hanging out. The Love Burial Mound that is said to hold the head of Kesa no Mae is immediately to the left as one enters the gate. Half covered with moss and planted with many camellias (rather a grim choice that) it has a quiet, forgotten air that seems quite fitting. In fact the whole desolate, little place is quite fitting to the name. Houses surround it, but these too have a retired air and rather add to its secrecy.

We are not, in the haiku, at this famous place in the Toba district, but somewhere that na flowers grow near a solitary pine to which the name Koi Tsuka has become attached. But the story of Kesa no Mae is widely known (even in the West through the movie Gates of Hell) and of course enters the haiku too.

Matsu hito ki means a single pine tree. But matsu hito can mean the person (lover) waited for. By joining the words to koi tsuka the haiku creates one of those direct images that are both poignant and fearfully ridiculous. In Kabuki every person on stage appears heroic and ridiculous at the same time. Such a one is this Kesa no Mae, lying in her husband's bed, her hair dressed like a man's. But she is waiting not for a lover, but for the man who will cut off her head in the belief that he is killing her husband to obtain her. It is too much, one wants to laugh.

It should be stressed that although these things may enter a haiku, they are not what make it a haiku. Anyone is free to let a haiku take him where he will, but the effectiveness of a haiku, or rather its efficacy, never depends on special information the reader must have.

This Noh haiku is in close imitation of one by Baiô, the founder of the Danrin school:

Na no hana ya
Mito moto sakishi
matsu no moto
Baiô

Na flowers ya
a single one bloomed
at the foot of a pine tree.

When the two are compared it is obvious that the Tokugawa ku is much stronger, particularly in the way it achieves instantaneity. The modern ku rather runs down and peters out at the last line.

Na no hana ya
Tsue tsuku haha no
te wo torite
Eisui

Na flowers ya
Walk-with-a-cane mother's
hand taken.

A frail old person ventures out for a walk on a mild day in late Spring. Alas, the once awesome parent, the once feared stick. All things are embraced in a moment of overwhelming tenderness.

On receiving a mallet as a gift a person said: "This mallet, its ancient days, was it plum or cherry?"

Such a moment of tender respect is here. The buried beloved of the previous haiku is here an old woman, the matsu remains as a dead stick. Of their ancient days the son knows little, except what he perceives through feeling, which does not mean pity.

One of the refreshing things about constant attendance at Noh plays is that one never sees a person on that stage who considers himself a victim. Those ties that are truly human, Emperor to Subject, Lord to Retainer, Lover to Lover, Parent to Child, remain as in a pristine society and the injustices, sorrows and trials that through these befall a person are not seen as separate from the ties themselves.

"Even when one is beaten, the parent's stick is lovable" is a line from Kosode Soga. In this play the Soga brothers make a farewell visit to their mother, on their way to the hunt where they intend to kill their father's murderer. For it is understood that they too will be killed. But the characters in the play are not concerned with this poignant fact. Against his mother's wishes, the younger brother Tokimune (Gorô) has left the temple where he was undergoing training, to join his brother in the revenge plan, and for this he has been disowned and forbidden his mother's house. The tie between parent and child is for one life only. That it should be severed with Tokimune's unfilial act unpardoned is too grievous to the brothers and they hope to obtain this pardon before the fatal hunt.

The mother refuses to admit she even has a son called Tokimune. His well-reasoned, spirited defense unavailing, the older brother Sukenari (Jûrô) states that he considers himself now equally disowned and the brothers leave, weeping. When the mother rises and says: "Hold them back, people. Unfilial act, disownment are forgiven, forgiven Tokimune," the onlooker as well as the brothers sheds tears of gratitude.

A going to the hunt cup is drunk, the brothers dance and the play speeds to its exalted ending. The last line: "That they have become the example of filial piety, the happiness of this!"

Noh is a concentrated mass of feeling expressed in pure behaviour. An inexhaustible treasure house for this latter age.

End of Spring Section

Summer begins with a change of clothing. People feel light and different. Even husband and wife, long accustomed, when passing turn to look again, it has been remarked. Sliding doors are removed and silk bordered bamboo curtains/partition the rooms at night. During the day these are mostly rolled up. All cushions are changed. Very fresh and festive is early Summer.

Atarashiki
butai ni shoka wo
mukaetari
Okashi

On a new-built
stage, the Start of Summer
to welcome in.

This is not likely to happen to a household more than once in many generations of summers. The building of a Noh stage is of great interest at every point, the raising of each pillar a ceremonial event. Where one is built in a house, as is the case here, everyone is intimately involved. And now the stage is finished and the time come to wipe it.

The daily wiping of the dancing area is a matter of some importance and diligently done is said to immensely increase a pupil's chances of becoming really accomplished. But the term is also used for the breaking in of a new stage.

On such an occasion Okina (The Ancient) may be performed, or at the very least, the text will be sung and other auspicious pieces will follow it.

It is a droll thought, the prolonged kowtow at the beginning of Okina, elaborately prepared for and done in complete silence, as a greeting and obeisance to Summer, that brings things to fulness.

Bent down in the kowtow the new smell, the new look of the wood would be vividly experienced, a joyous feeling added to the solemn matter of Okina.

Shinchiku no
butai ni soshite
natsu zashiki
Chika

A new-built
stage, and with it
a Summer parlour.

Rising from the kowtow, a little unexpectedly, there is the Summer room. Familiar yet new, as it has been newly changed for Summer and has never been seen in just this way. The nice thing about the Noh stages in private houses is that they always have tatami (rush mat) rooms along with them. Most public theaters nowadays have western style seats.

A Summer parlour is an informal thing. In fact, as summer advances it becomes a place one does not much care to ask strangers to enter. The heat rather takes the starch out of it and out of those who use it.

Shiba to iu
mono no soworô
natsu zashiki Baiô

A grass sort of
thing, one ventures to say,
Summer parlour.

The title of this Tokugawa haiku is In Edo, and it has the roughness of a Kabuki actor in purposeful crescendo stomping from the hana michi (flower passage) on to

on grass. That is where the audience should be, informally on the grass. Tatami is sort of a grass.

It would, of course, be quite impossible to have a Kabuki stage in a private house. Noh, however, is quite properly seen and acted in a strictly limited area. But even in a Noh house the natsu zashiki begins to sprawl from the tatami onto the engawa(veranda) and out into the garden, and one may be brought up sharply by encountering an Ie Moto (head of an acting house) in immaculate white underwear, striding for all the world as if he were a Kabuki actor.

But in the haiku we are only in the beginning of summer, when there has just been the change to lighter garments, in their way more elegant, and in a situation uncommonly festive.

Waka ba suru
madonobe ni shite
waki bashira
Manzô

It sports young leaves,
the window area;
Waki pillar.

Okina is not a Noh play and there is no waki. The part of the Kyôgen actor is very prominent, however, and quite long. It occurs at the end and the actor, in his unaccustomed seat by the Shite pillar, would have ample time to ponder this new acting place.

There are only two colours, the colour of wood and green. The green of the pine tree on the back wall, and green bamboo painted by the low chorus exit and entrance door. All quite as usual. And there is the Waki pillar, without Waki just now. Here is an interesting thing. There is a window behind the pillar through which can be seen the movement and glitter of young leaves. The feeling of being outside is quite complete. More than that, ebullient Summer seems to be coming onto the stage itself, lending leaves to the Waki pillar.

This Emperor's reign! The drums and the flute sound. The voices sing of the ever flowing waterfall, and the very windows and pillars compose Japanese poems.

HOTOTOGISU

The fourth month is also called U Tsuki, for then the U (Deutzia Crenata) puts forth its stark white flowers. U is a sound of grief, and the fourth month is somewhat tinged with regret for Spring. The fifth month is the pure Summer month, while the sixth, with its great heat, again looks longingly toward Autumn.

The plays meant specifically for this season are few, compared to Spring and Autumn plays, and they are mostly quite harrowing. For Summer in Japan is the time the hototogisu is heard, the season of pretas (insatiate ghosts) and of hell denizens.

Michinoku no
tabinishi kahishi
furin ka Takeshi

While on a Michinoku
journey bought, was it,
this windbell?

Oni yuri ya
Iseji ni tsuzuku
tôge michi Nobiru

Tiger lily ya
The Ise road become
a steep path.

Summer is not traditionally a travel season. "In life a rare thing, cooling off under a travel hat." (Bashô). Even the all-the-provinces-one-glance ^{TRAVELER} of the Noh plays is likely to spend the Summer in retirement raising flowers.

to perform a mountain practice, climbing Tateyama, which is a mountain where one may meet dead people. One of these has knowledge of the monk's intention to go to Michinoku and gives him a message for his wife who lives there. On her husband's behalf she is to offer up to the Buddhas his straw raincoat and wicker hat. This seems all right so far, but later one learns to what use these were put in life. The dead man made his living by a peculiar form of hunting. Imitating the voice of the parent utô, he would entice the baby birds to come rushing from their hiding places in the sand and then grab them, the helpless parents flying overhead, weeping tears of blood. To keep this blood away from his body he wore the mino and kasa he now wants offered up.

Whu these, how could these be pleasing to the Buddhas? But the requests of the dead are never questioned in Noh plays and as the monk and the hunter's wife begin to offer up the service, the hunter himself appears, wearing the rough black wig, lean man's mask and sober clothes worn by those who engage in taking life.

In Kyôgen such people are not particularly soberly dressed. When a Kyôgen actor steps forward to announce that he is a person who every day goes to the mountains to slaughter living things and thinks he will do just that again today, one laughs and awaits with anticipation further developments. But in plays like Utô from the yobikake on (that splendid device of arresting the Waki's attention by calling from beyond the raised curtain) an ominous tone seems to creep into what goes on on stage, though no one appears to be doing it. An ominous tone these haiku, too, achieve by invisible means. Where are we being taken? To hell and back.

There is a great emphasis on trespass in these summer plays. The burden seems almost intolerable as the Shite describes how such a person goes through the world:

"Dawn or dusk, taking life. Even the tardy Spring day, as his activities have no end, lacks hours. The Autumn night made white with fishing fires, however long, he never sleeps. At the height of Summer he feels no noonday heat, in the depth of Winter he knows no morning cold. Pursuing birds is the herb of forgetfulness for every pain or sorrow of his being."

This seems quite horrifying and the horror is intensified by the motionless presence of the wife and child.

But what is being described here is really something very splendid. Ekka Citta, one-pointedness of mind, and the subsequent coming into being of the adamant body. "He has forgotten retribution," says the Shite in Utô. And in Ukai, a somewhat similar Summer play: "The cormorant boat's fishing fires lit, what of the dark road after these?" What of it? These hunters and fishermen just don't care. They are not only oblivious to bodily discomfort, they are totally fearless.

"The human heart that does not tremble seeing this is truly more terrible than devils (oni) are," says the monk of the fierce landscape of Tateyama, which seems to him like hell itself, or alternately, with its net of precipitous mountain paths, like the crossroads from where one descends to the bad births.

life's activity as a form of penitence and in Utô the hunter does the same. The actions are horrifying but fascinating, even though there are no utô, nor cormorants, no fish. Horror and fascination do not lie in the fate of the pursued, but in the fierceness of the pursuit which here, without object, is seen as without malice. What we have in these fourth place plays are people who see the full nature of their actions and to whom, no trace of the idea of a self remaining, all the six paths have become playthings.

Oni have all sorts of devices for playing tricks. There is the mino and kasa which make a person invisible so that he is free to commit any outrage unpunished, an opportunity the characters in Kyôgen seize on with relish. The hunter in Utô is bolder. He wears a mino and kasa to reveal a person who is not really there and to accumulate this no-person's offenses. Like the pilgrim's hat, staff and sandals left at the last temple of a pilgrimage, his blood-stained mino and kasa are the guise in which he crossed the world. And in offering these up, he offers up the world.

Windbell and lily are sixth month dai, but the peculiarly ominous tone in these haiku is more in keeping with the fourth month. In both the threat is embodied in the first line and is, funnily, really the same, because Michinoku is forever associated with oni through Taira no Kanemori's poem;

Michinoku no
Adachi ga hara no
Kuro Tsuka ni
oni komoreru to
iu wa makoto ka

"Michinoku's
Adachigahara's
Black Mound, there
devils live in hiding"
is that story true?

Actually this poem was sent in jest to Minamoto no Shigeyuki who was governor of Michinoku and had boasted that in that province, at a place called Kuro Tsuka, there were any number of beautiful women, not indifferent to him. But it has become the source of Adachi ga Hara, one of the grimmest and goriest of Noh plays.

A windbell is a small thing, with a delicate tinkling sound meant to suggest coolness. To come back from that vast, unfamiliar place with this small object, there is something moving in that. Or is it a thing taken back to Tateyama, from the coolness of that northern area to the heat of those tormented regions. All the wife could think of perhaps. Again: A bell from Michinoku? Is it quite safe?

Oni are given to unpleasant laughter. The oni lily (tiger lily) in the haiku seems to be growing by the side of a steep path that started out as the road to Ise. That is very nice, but where does it end? The moment and eternity are brought together in these three lines. Up to the world of the gods, down to the bad births, climbing and falling for millions of lives. And always past this lily. Haha.

For a thousand years the great poets of Japan were as familiar to the tongue as household words. Thus ever-present, the events of their lives are not so much recorded history as handed down tradition and we often find the same event related as having taken place in more than one locale. It is thought that Ono no Komachi was first seen at court as one of the Maihime performing the Five Festivals Dance one year. "Every time she smiles a hundred witcheries are born" might have been said of her, and it is not impossible to imagine that Sôjô Henjô's famous poem in praise of these maidens was written with this performance in mind. As Yoshimine Munetada he was perhaps already in attendance on the prince who became the Emperor Nimmyô, and there are conspicuous links between the two great poets.

Three places around Kyôto are associated with Komachi: Ichi Hara a village north of Kyôto, the scene of Kayoi Komachi. Sekidera on Ausaka Yama, where both Sekidera Komachi and Ômu Komachi take place. And Zuishin-in, a temple in Ono village in the Daigo district south-east of Kyôto.

Haru semi ya
Komachi keshô no
mizu wa kore
Hideo

Spring cicada ya
Komachi's make-up
water, this!

This haiku was written at the Zuishin-in. The road from Kyôto to the Daigo district does not perceptibly rise, yet one has the feeling of entering the mountains. These at Zuishin-in loom close, more rugged and severe than the gentler hills west and north of the capital. Once one enters the gate, the highway that runs right by it is forgotten as the eye sees only the spacious temple grounds and the mountains beyond. Few visitors come, and the traces of Komachi here are still a natural part of the temple and the grounds. That the house of Ono flourished in this area is beyond doubt. There is the name of the village and its surroundings. Traces of a family temple remain nearby and Zuishin-in has a copy of the Kokinshû preface in the hand of Ono no Michikaze, famous calligrapher and supposed cousin of Komachi's.

If it is assumed that Fukakusa no Shôsshô and Yoshimine no Shôshô are the same person, Komachi must have lived on the Ono estate while she was a favorite at the Emperor Nimmyô's court. That she lived there when a few years after the Emperor's death she retired from court still a young woman seems definitely established. The Komachi Keshô no Ido preserved in the grounds, is the place where she performed her morning and evening make-up. It is now a stagnant pool, enclosed in an earth and stone wall, like a wide well. Stone steps lead down to the water and in early Summer azaleas on one side screen it as in brocade. A chilly place in other seasons, however. Perhaps Komachi came down in person only in summer. In her time it was a spring from which a small stream flowed, now only remembered in a little bridge called the Make-up Bridge.

The first character in the word keshô (make-up) means transformation, change. Springsemi^Iya, Komachi transformed. That seems a bit sad, but we need not linger there. Komachi's change-and-adornment water, this! Amazement, tenderness, admiration is what one feels. This stagnant pool one would hesitate to dip a hand into once mirrored and enhanced the beauty of Komachi. It is easy to explain that since the spring has run dry the water is no longer pure, that it was different then. Water is water, clean or dirty. A Komachi bending over this pool could make it pure again.

The haiku seems to say that Komachi's beauty was no more lasting than a semi's life. Such a statement, familiar to Noh plays, has no value of course if that is all it says. Vanity has ever been castigated, without the slightest effect, because it has a valid base. With a person like Komachi, whose actions are ^{FROM FROM} without karmic effect (as Ransetsu haiku so brilliantly shows^{II}), putting on make-up is an act of compassion. It is to reveal the karma-caused real as a manifestation of the unchanging reality that she adorns herself. The karma-caused real is in Japan called zui-en, following or according to karma. Zui-shin, the name of the temple, means following the citta, or, in a more limited sense, following the heart. An apt name for a place where once Komachi's house stood.

Love-visits Komachi.

The suburb of Fukakusa is a short train ride from the center of Kyôto and much like every other place on the Kyôto-Ôsaka railroad. But very soon one is out of the machi and in real country. Here temples are many, mostly in greatly dilapidated condition, almost abandoned. But that is not such a bad fate.

Near the top of the highest hill, Shichimen Yama, is the Schichimenyama Shrine, remote and temple-like. Going up even beyond the shrine one has a view in all directions. Toward Kyôto there is an almost continuous sea of buildings and other constructions. Looking East one sees hills beyond hills, bamboo, susuki, pine trees. Beyond those hills lies Ono village, and somewhere across this country did Fukakusa no Shôhō come and go, a hundred nights.

To this most ardent of her suitors Komachi set that task on promise to receive him. He was to come on foot, in mean disguise lest he be recognised. Each night he had to carve a notch into the bench used to rest the shafts of her oxcart on.

I. Haru semi, is a variety of cicada that sings in early summer, often in pine trees, with a sound (shan-shan) less insistent than that of the semi that sing at the height of Summer.

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On the hundredth night, the lover died in a snow storm without gaining Ono and his reward.

Until not so long ago a narrow path from the direction of Fukakusa through a bamboo thicket in front of Zuishin-in was pointed out as Shôshô's coming and going path, but no trace now remains of either path or thicket.

Shôshô no
kayoi-ji to kiku
hagi wakaba
Fukuhisako

"Shôshô's
love-visits path" we're told.
Hagi young leaves.

This does not at first glance seem to be a Summer haiku. Kayoi Komachi, the play that has Shôshô as the Shite and Komachi as the Tsure, is an Autumn play for the ninth month. Kayoi, to come and go, is most often used for the regular visits of a lover to the house of the beloved, and in Japan the time for Lovers' meetings is Autumn. Aki yori saki ni (from Autumn forward) is a pledge one hears in Noh plays. If by Autumn the matsu hito has not come, the waiting one is desolate indeed.

Hagi (bush clover) is one of the seven ^{flowering} Autumn grasses. Its leaves when turned figure in Autumn poems. With its graceful, trailing branches that sway with every breeze, and its delicate white or purple flowers it brings to mind the gentle ways and flowing sleeves of young girls. In Sotoba Komachi the Shite speaks of herself as having been more lovely than flowering hagi even.

Kiku, too, has an Autumn sound even though here it does not actually mean the chrysanthemum, but to ask and to hear. These things go to make up the subtle power of the haiku which not until the last three syllables reveals its season.

Shôshô is directly named. She is present as the hagi. Between them is the to and fro path that is both asked about and heard about. Did nothing come of all this to and fro? On the contrary, there are the hagi's young leaves. The dark and single thing (Shôshô) having become all this lightness, grace and freshness, wakaba, young leaves, or: the words of Japanese poetry.

A hundred nights, fascinating and mysterious number. Ninety nine nights and one. For though Shôshô traveled by moonlight and in darkness, on cloudless, still nights and in rain, wind and snow, except for the one night his aspect was the same: "With his mino a kasa. In hand (this body's painful world as if to say) a many-jointed bamboo stick." But for that final night of promised meeting the wicker hat is discarded for a court cap, the straw raincoat for flower-dyed robes, purple hakama, a red hunting garment perfectly arranged. The bamboo stick? That night he carried nothing.

The description of Shôshô splendidly arrayed is almost the end of Kayoi Komachi. Only one thing follows it. Thus he was dressed, but "What of the wine to drink?" Wine here means fulfillment, coition. "Though it be the winecup of the moon (ie. Komachi), as it is against the precepts, let us abstain. A single thought-instant's satori dissolves all trespass."

This is all the play says about that wild and desperate night in the hills of Fukakusa. Nothing more should be said, for only this occurred.

Shôshô was absent from the New Rice Banquet. As this was held in the 11th month, the hundred nights should be reckoned from somewhere in the 9th month, from the Chrysanthemum Festival perhaps. Because of the poem mentioned before, which he wrote for such an occasion, mention of the New Rice Banquet brings to mind Shôjô Henjô. If he in fact is Fukakusa no Shôshô, how is the story then? It is that Komachi was deeply attached to him and the kayoi-ji must be taken in its most common meaning of the secret visits of an accepted lover. Yoshimine no Shôshô, too, after a certain night was seen no more in his familiar aspect. On the night of the burial of the Emperor Nimmyô on Fukakusayama, Munesada exchanged his courtier garments for a monk's robe and that same night climbed Mt. Hiei. This happened in the 3d month, the last month of Spring. The two stories seem to complement each other, the same thing seen from an opposite view, or at a different time of day or year.

Henjô was a grandson of the Emperor Kammu and became an eminent monk and greatly honoured person. Genkei-ji, the temple where he resided as the abbot, is in the village of Kwazan. It sits back far from the main road and now small and unfrequented yet maintains the attributes of a real temple. The poet's grave is not far from there. It is fenced in, as befits his imperial descent, the actual grave hidden by a grove of trees. But from all directions houses press on it, showing it the side where all the junk and garbage of modern housekeeping accumulates. The ground inside the fence is totally neglected.

The Emperor Nimmyô is commonly known as Fukakusa Tennô, because his misasagi (mausoleum) is on Fukakusayama. Actually this is a mountain in name only, the ground now being completely flat. The misasagi is, of course, scrupulously kept up. It still faces rice fields, but houses are creeping up on it and a stone's throw behind it runs the Nagoya-Kôbe expressway, whose fumes will take their toll of the old trees in time.

On his travels through all the provinces, Saigyô Hôshi came to the province of Sanuki and there visited the grave of the exiled Emperor Sutoku. It was falling down and completely overgrown with weeds. Saigyô was so moved that he found it impossible to leave and for seven days continuously read sutras there and offered up this poem:

Yoshi ya kimi
mukashi no tama no
toko totemo
kakaran nochi wa
ika ni kawasen

For a while, my Lord,
of ancient times the jewelled
dais even
perhaps to sit on, and after,
to what may it not change.



While there is in the sixth month the full luxuriance of Summer grasses brought about by the fifth month's rains, from here on in we are in the waterless month. Human beings, it is true, shed a great deal of sweat, but from the heavens comes only the brief and sudden Summer downpour.

Basu orishi
kisan sô ni
yûdachi su
Shinsui

On a just-of-the-bus,
bound-for-his-temple monk
a Summer downpour.

Looking at this as seen by a Noh person it is amusing. For then everything is upside down. The monk is not, here, setting out on a long foot journey for some place not seen before, but returning by bus to his home temple. Then, not sudden nightfall in the midst of day, no icy rain to chill him, no heavy snowfall to wipe out all traces of a mountain path. All these and many others may out of a blue sky befall the traveler in a Noh play and fill him with wonder and some fear. No. Here a Summer evening downpour, such as may drench you to the skin in a moment, but whose effects are definitely more laughable than awesome. For who will carry anything extra if he can help it on the hot Summer days in the old capital. So that where in other seasons people will sedately open up their umbrellas at the first scatter of raindrops, a yûdachi brings a sudden rush for shelter, much clatter and noise and even an air of conviviality. The monk may get wet, but that is refreshing rather after the days heat and there will be tea and a bath when he gets to the temple. This, if we think of him as coming back from a long journey. Of course, he may simply have been on an errand nearby.

And here is a chance meeting with a group of Noh people who have likely arrived in taxis for their haikumeeting at Nanzen-ji. As it is Summer, most of them if not all, will be wearing western clothes and will superficially not look different from any group of businessmen on a tour of that temple. Knowing just where he is and where to go, unlike the traveler in a Noh play, the monk will no doubt in the business-like manner of present day monks disappear through a small door in the temple wall and be seen no more. He has neither asked nor wondered who these strangers might be. Yet, was there not perhaps among them one who called up this sudden shower to stay him in his haste and question him. Perhaps while sheltering under one tree. Kyôto has well over a thousand temples and one sees monks everywhere. Still it is impossible not to wonder everytime one sees one where he is going, where he has been. One is always in the position of the Kyôgen Interlude Player, who, surprised to see a monk sitting in some deserted place, exclaims: "Noble monk, a from where to where person are you?" How much more so a Noh person whose everyday companions are such great monks as Saigyô Hôshi, Nichiren Shân and Rensei Hôshi.

Our Nanzen-ji monk may well be the last person to believe that a Noh actor could wield the weather, but is it in fact so unbelievable?

One early Autumn there was a performance in one of the lavish pleasure inns in the Higashiyama area. The spacious gardens with large pond and moonviewing platform, winding paths and bridges, were made for noble pastimes. The skies were dark and threatening, the play was Hagoromo (Feather Garment). The audience sat under the open sky. When the Jo no Mai was danced and the kiri (final singing) sung, which is perhaps the most ravishingly joyous in Noh, and the Heavenly Being had soared away from the beach of Mio, the skies overhead cleared and the air became as pure and blue as it can only be in Japan in Spring and Autumn. Believe or disbelieve who will, it was the power of the dancing sleeves that swept away the clouds.

The real basis of this haiku, as it is of numberless others, is a Chinese couplet in the Wakanroeshû.

green moss road, slippery/ monk returns to temple
red leaves sound, dry/ deer abide in forest.

Along a slippery, green moss road a monk is returning to his temple. Among the dry rustle of red leaves deer abide in the forest.

This is fascinating. The first line is single, cool coloured, sound subdued, moist, seasonless. The second multiple, brilliantly coloured, with sound, dry, with season. How at ease the monk, walking out in the open for all to see, though it may be there are no eyes to see him on this mountain temple path. The restless deer are hiding, but their movements and the call of the male can be heard, and hunters may be stalking them. Another way is to take the lines together. The deer are startled by the approach of a human being. It is only a harmless monk, but to them as terrifying as a hunter. This is the more poignant because the Buddha first expounded the Four Noble Truths in a deer park. The couplet shows the free and the bound, but in a way that the bound appear as noble as the free. This is possible because the link between them is the Buddha.

Most of the temples around Kyôto are built on the hills and at one time were probably approached along such mossy paths. Nowadays one can drive up to almost any temple and there is usually even a busstop right by.

The haiku seems to relate to the first line only, but this is not so. It contains both lines. What colour there is, is an asphalt grey, the dryness in the second line is tacitly present as an arid dustiness, the real sounds of the forest as the mechanical noises of the modern city. The evening downpour comes as a relief into this. A necessary bath before entering the Mountain Gate (Sanmon), the entrance to a temple.

Round Fans, Folding fans.

One of the clichés about Kyôto a person who lives there regularly hears from those who do not, is that it is cold in Winter and hot in Summer. These admittedly are faults in a woman, but they rather recommend a city as a place to live. Spring and Autumn weather are heavenly, as they are almost anywhere in Japan, but it is in Summer that Kyôto comes into its own. It seems to pull together as a city. The naturalness of Japanese life to some extent reasserts itself as everyone enters into the fascinating possibilities of creating at least the look of coolness.

keiko owayu
mai ôgi motte
ôgi toru
Manzô

The lesson over,
dance fan in hand
pick up a fan.

Japanese houses are cool and the practice area in a Noh house has a special coolness. Nevertheless, in Kyôto heat during practice, there the pupil is, handling a fan absolutely bathed in sweat. Wing fan, cloud fan, frost fan, none of these movements creates even the slightest cooling breeze for the dancer. Finished, he could, of course, begin to fan himself with the dance fan, but this feels quite wrong and without putting the one down, the summer fan is hurriedly taken up.

There are two kinds of summer fans. The small folding fan one carries everywhere, and the round fan used at home or by onlookers at a summer festival. The small ôgi, is moved rather rapidly, the uchiwa more leisurely. This is not etiquette, it is just how the fan makes on act. In Noh, too, there are folding fans (large) and round fans. The latter (actually not quite round) are only used by Chinese characters, always considered quite elegant and strange. Tengu (goblins) carry a roundish feather fan.

Furubitari
ôgi naredomo
sutegatashi
Shigenobu

A rather worn
fan it is, but still,
hard to throw out.

Sutenan to
shite suterarenu
kono ôgi
Osin

About to throw it out,
it was not thrown out,
this fan.

As Autumn approaches, it becomes rather easy to lose a fan by leaving it behind somewhere, forgotten. But to coldbloodedly throw one away is another matter. Much more so a dance fan. What could ever take the place of a fan. Anyone who dances with one will have that feeling. The strictly limited fan vocabulary in Noh seems unlimited to the person using it. The innumerable ways of handling the fan in Kabuki seem equally perfect.

If the Japanese had been able to continue within their closed borders to transform the Kali Age, perhaps throwing away all of Noh, Jôruri, Kabuki in the process, what even greater form might have emerged to take their place. Somewhere, sometime, this solution must have been made. But here the time for solution by throwing away seems to be past, and here the ôgi is, offering its coolness to someone perhaps already somewhat chilled.

Te ni fururu
uchiwa no kage ya
Mizu no tsuki

A held in hand
round fan's reflection, is it?
The moon in the water.

In poetry ôgi and uchiwa are likened to wind, snow, the moon. In this



haiku on the other hand, the moon in the water is seen as the reflection of a fan someone is holding.

It is said that the whole vast Genji Monogatari rose clearly in Murasaki Shikibu's mind when from her room at Ishiyama-dera she saw the moon reflected in the waters of lake Biwa. This moment seems to be put down here in a touchingly light-hearted way. At the same time there is a gripping sadness, such as is commonly felt when Summer and Autumn are speeding toward their meeting.

This mingled gaiety and sadness and the sense of white perceived somewhat mysteriously against darkness, is to perfection used in Hajitomi, a sixth month play based on the Yûgao chapter of the Tales of Genji. It is very brief and nothing happens. Except that someone faintly visible through a trellis is urged to reveal her flower face and finally steps out. Then "At that time Genji...." in the very lowest range of the voice, and the telling of Genji's night visits to Yûgao follows.

The play begins at the Unrin-in, where a monk has been in summer seclusion tending to flowers. One of the merits of this practice is that by not going abroad one does not destroy the lives of the many tiny creatures that that populate the ground in Summer. Ruminating on the excellence of the practice, the monk is preparing to pick the best of the flowers to offer up at the temple, when a woman appears and quotes a poem by Sôjô Henjô: "If you take them in hand, the hand defiles them. Just as they grow make them an offering to the Three World Buddhas." The monk could be excused if he felt that one can't win, but actually he does not seem to hear the words, but becomes aware of a white flower that was not there before. Questions and answers about this flower develop, and fascinated by the mysterious words of the woman, the monk sets out for the Gojô district in search of Yûgao's house. He finds it without difficulty, a poor overgrown dwelling in a small street. Moved to think that this is that very place of Genji's visits, the monk quotes part of a Chinese poem about the empty winegourd and dishes of Confucius' favorite disciple Yen Hui, who practised poverty. (Even when Genji took Yûgao away from here to the Nanigashi no In, that proved to be a desolate place and there was nothing to eat in the house.)

By this time the Nochi Shite has entered the stage, but is only dimly seen through an evening-glory overgrown trellis. She continues the couplet about poverty, though there has been a considerable interval since the Waki quoted the first part of it. From here on in the chorus speaks for the Waki.

Until the rongi, which ends with the Shite stepping from behind the trellis, a succession of Chinese poems is quoted, though some of the sources are no longer known. The tone of this section is infinitely sad, ~~very~~ beautiful and quiet. The kind of sadness that makes you think the singers are producing it with their voices, but carefully listened to, they are actually doing nothing, just allowing the syllables to come out, floating on the fushi. Small changes are made in the original poems, which in every case make the changed word come out to read grief, or lament. Then, just before the rongi: "Facing the East window, a tower moon, it strikes the kinshitsu^I, grief's Autumn Mountain, the landscape of the ghastlyness of things."

I. A large koto. This instrument is one of the things set out for the Star Festival (7th of the 7th lunar month), the one night of the year the Weaver and the Oxherd, husband and wife, are allowed to meet across the River of Heaven (Milky Way). One will note that in the lines quoted every thing points to Autumn.

The story of Yûgao is a harrowing love story, but up till this part in the play it has scarcely been touched upon. Yet one is already plunged into what can only be the very depths of love sorrow. Indeed it would seem that unless one pass here, the other story can not be begun to be told.

The rongi that now follows takes the form of urging the Shite to emerge from behind the wicket. She at first responds only by quoting poems she wrote in life, which is sad, but charming too. A woman trying to get out of something by paying no attention. Then: "Will you pray for my remains?" But the character used is one meaning to visit, too, so that the very womanly question: Will you come to see me after, is included. Reassured on this point, she lifts the half-wicket and steps out.

For a long time now, in most parts of the world, a gift from the West, there has been a great absorption in the sordid, which is considered in some way meritorious, real, gutsy. For this disease a study of the kuse in Hajitomi would be medicine enough. Without further ado it plunges into the Genji Monogatari.

"At that time Genji on this Yûgao's grass pillow lay all through the night, a passing guest, and as he listened heard next door the noble voice of one preparing for a pilgrimage: 'Namu Maitrea Buddha...'"

To enter into these lines, here simplified, is to get a glimpse of the ghastliness of things, what one must face to cross the Autumn Mountain. This ghastliness continues all through the kuse, inexplicably, in the plain events of their meeting, in the poems exchanged, in Yûgao's refusal to say who she is, in Genji's gentle attempts to persuade.

After the dance, that climax in a play when all words cease, and the revealed Shite dances to the music of flute and drums, speech is resumed with the quoting of a final poem, Genji's first poem to Yûgao:

Shite (without beat): If one might pick it,
 ah, this is what it is, one would know.
 In gathering dusk

Ji Utai (with beat) : dimly-dimly seen
 evening glowry flower.

The kiri (cutting off) begins at dimly-dimly (honobono), a typical third place kiri, rhythmic in a most sweet and tender way. Toward its end: "I will say where I really live", "I will always pray for you (visit you)". And as the cock crows and the dawn bell rings: "Before dawn, she said, Yûgao's dwelling, before dawn, Yûgao's dwelling." And once more going behind the wicket, she disappeared."

Extremely sweet, extremely funny, extremely sad. After all that, we (and Radiant Genji) have been told exactly nothing. Who can know the heart of a woman. Not even Shiva knows all of the heart of Shakti.